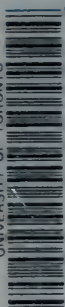


# BEHOLD IONA

## A GUIDE AND SOUVENIR

UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO



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BEHOLD IONA



*Communion Table*

# BEHOLD IONA

## *A Guide and Souvenir*

*Behold Iona !*

*A blessing on each eye that see-eth it—*

ST. COLUMBA.

*Edited by*  
JOHN MORRISON



THE IONA COMMUNITY  
Glasgow . Iona . Edinburgh

## THE ISLAND

*"Unto this place, small and mean though it be, great homage shall yet be paid, not only by the kings and peoples of the Scots, but by rulers of foreign and barbarous nations and their subjects. In great veneration, too, shall it be held by men of other Churches."*

—St. Columba on the eve of his death.

THE Isle of Iona—one of the best loved names in Christendom—lies within the Inner Hebrides, six and a half miles south of Staffa and one and a quarter miles west of the Ross of Mull. To the west, beyond Tiree and Coll, only the ocean lies between Iona and the coast of Labrador over two thousand miles away. Little more than three and a half miles long and one and a half miles broad, it is older than any of the surrounding islands, Trenholme writes: "When our planet, from a flaming mass of combustion like the sun, shrivelled into a globe with a solid crust, and the first oceans condensed in the hollows of its surface—then it was that the Archaean rocks of which Iona and the Outer Hebrides consist were formed on the sea bottom. They contain no fossils; for so far as is known no living creature as yet existed in the desolate waste of waters, or on the primeval land. They are hard, rugged, and twisted; and in Iona, as elsewhere, marble has been developed by the vast heat and pressure they have undergone."

Anciently, in Gaelic or Pictish, the Island was called Ioua, the name invariably used by St. Adamnan centuries later. In Irish it was known as Hy or Y. In modern Gaelic it is called I\*. It is also known in Gaelic as Innis-nam-Druidbneach—"Island of the Druids." After the coming of Columba it became known throughout the Highlands as I-Chaluim-Chille—"Island of Columba of the Church (or Cell)." It is possible that "Iona" is derived from I-shona (pronounced ee-hona)—the blessed or sacred isle. It is strange and moving that the Hebrew word for Dove is "Iona"—the Latin "Columba." It is known to have also been called "Isle of Dreams," "Isle of Saints," and "Isle of the Sculptors," the last from its pre-eminence as the home of masons cunning in the working of stone.

Its ancient Gaelic name signifies that the Island was a centre of Druid worship long before the birth of Christ and the coming of Columba. For as long, then, as man has known of this little place it has spoken to him of the things of the spirit. "To tell the story of Iona," wrote Fiona Macleod, "is to go back to God and to end in God."

It was under the influence of Columba that the glory and renown of Iona blossomed into full flower. "It developed into the most famous centre of Celtic Christianity, the mother community of numerous monastic houses whence missionaries were despatched for the conversion of Scotland and Northern England, and to which for centuries students flocked from all parts of the North. After St. Columba's death, his relics rested here until they were moved to Ireland early in the ninth century."

\* Pronounced as E in English.



Pilgrims came from far and near to die in the Island, that they might lie in its sacred soil, and from all parts of Northern Europe the bodies of the illustrious dead were brought here for burial. For more than 400 years the Reilig Odhrain was the burial place of kings. Kenneth MacAlpin, the first Monarch of the United Kingdom of Picts and Scots—a kingdom the foundation of which was laid by Columba—was brought here in 860 and for the two hundred years following all but four of the Scottish Kings are said to have been buried here, including Duncan and MacBeth. Munro, Dean of the Isles, who visited Iona in 1549, says that in the Reilig Odhrain there were three tombs like small chapels inscribed, *Tumulus Regum Scotiae*—where forty-eight Scots kings, *Tumulus Regum Hiberniae*—where four Irish kings, *Tumulus Regum Norwegiae*—where seven Norwegian kings were buried.

These tombs have long disappeared. The stones gathered in the present Ridge of the Kings are all mediaeval and cannot commemorate such early burials. The parallel Ridge of the Chiefs contains the remains of many of the great Highland Chieftains: Reginald, Lord of the Isles, Founder of the Nunnery and the Benedictine Monastery; MacLeans of Coll, of Duart and of Loch Buie; MacLeod of MacLeod; MacDonald of Glengarry, and many others, for, as Pennant says, "All were ambitious of lying in this holy spot." There can be few places throughout Christendom whose soil is so rich in the dust of princes, prelates and saints.

To visit Iona is to realise how perfectly the island must have suited the needs of Columba and his brothers. Separated from, it was yet easily accessible to, Mull and the mainland. Sheltered, it enjoyed a mildness of climate and a natural fertility favourable to cultivation and the provision of sustenance for the Community. "Its broken surface gave ample scope for that devout solitude so greatly craved by the religious of the Gaelic Church." Communication with Ireland was easy and close. And as Miss Grant remarks, "Iona was politically ideally placed for St. Columba's great work of converting the Picts, for it was within easy reach of the Great Glen, the natural corridor that led to the capital of the Pictish Kingdom and it was upon the very boundary of the sphere of influence annexed by the Dalriads."

Finally, the beauty of the place, always of such great moment to the whole early Church and never more than to the Gael, as the siting of their churches and monasteries testifies, held him and his brothers in a love that has echoed down the ages, to be renewed, surely, in the hearts of all who visit the Island. For blessed is "the eye that see-eth it," especially in the spring and summer months, flower-bright, luminous with the rare quality of light which informs that region, enclosed in birdsong, serenity and peace. Then, miraculously, Iona is possessed of the pristine loveliness of the beginning of things; possessed, in unique reality, of the translucency and charm, as of the First Spring, sometimes reflected in the mediaeval landscapes of the Early Masters.

## COLUMBA

COLUMBA was born on 7th December, 521, at Gartan, in County Donegal. His father, Feidlimid, was a member of the reigning house in Ireland, and was closely connected with that of Dalriada (Argyll). His mother, Eithne, was descended from the King of Leinster. A tenth-century *Life* says that "he was eligible to the Kingship of Erin according to family and it would have been offered to him, if he had not abandoned it for God." Columba studied under the distinguished Finnian of Moville and then under Finnian of Clonard, being ordained to the priesthood c. 551. During his residence in Ireland he founded a number of churches and the famous Monasteries of Daire Calgaich (Derry) and Dairmagh (Durrow).

In May, 563, in his forty-second year, he made his way with twelve disciples—four of them kinsmen—across the sea and, on Saturday the 12th, the Eve of Pentecost, landed on Iona—according to tradition at Port na Churaich (Port of the Coracle) where a grassy mound some sixty feet long is still pointed out as marking the place where the monks are reputed to have buried their boat. Legend has it that his first act on landing was to climb a rocky hill to assure himself that Ireland was not in sight, he having banished himself from his native land in expiation of having involved the death in battle of some three thousand men. This battle was the outcome of his famous dispute with his old tutor, Finnian of Moville, over the ownership of Columba's unauthorised transcription of the Vulgate brought by Finnian from Rome. Be that as it may, close by Port na Churaich is the Carn Cul ri Eirinn—literally "the hill of turning the back to Ireland." St. Adamnan, biographer of the famous *Life*, gives Columba's missionary zeal as the reason for the saint's coming to Alba. He was certainly under no permanent sentence of banishment for he revisited Ireland on several occasions, being received with great honour.

For thirty-four momentous years Iona was to be the headquarters of this remarkable man, prince and priest, saint and statesman, man of Christ and friend of the people, as indefatigable in the service of his fellows as he was devoted to the offices of God. It is perhaps this quality, this rare capacity of fulfilling in perfect synthesis the dual purpose of life on earth according to the Christian ethic—to love God and one's neighbour as oneself—that distinguishes, more than any other, the saint from the common man. At any rate, it was possessed in marked degree by all the saints and by none, perhaps, more than by Columba.

He was as concerned with the well-being of men's bodies as he was for the welfare of their souls. For him there was no department of man's

activity that was not the province for the practical expression of the Christian ethic. He fulfilled in himself and in all he did that abiding sense of the oneness-of-all, the most significant emphasis in the Celtic Church. Religion was life: all life was holy, indivisible, the province for the fulfilment of the grace of God. Living was a sacrament, to pray was to work, to work was to pray. It was inevitable, therefore, that so practical a sense of religion, persistently pursued, tirelessly exercised, should have resulted in a greatly enhanced standard of life in all its branches, in agriculture, in learning, in art. In a very real sense Columba and these little bands of twelve men, expert in the practical things of everyday life as in those pertaining to eternity, who issued forth from the seclusion of the Sacred Isle on their dangerous missionary enterprises across the North, brought civilisation to Alba. Their missions concerned the whole of life—the integration of the spiritual and the material: the cure of souls, the science of healing, the cultivation of land, the carving of wood, the building of houses and ships as well as of churches and monasteries, the wroughting of iron, the baking of bread, the work of smiths, of fishermen and hunters.

Columba himself was deeply concerned in the political issues of his adopted country and influenced these to greater purpose than any man before him. He not only converted the North and West of Scotland, established Christian colonies in Central Scotland and as far afield as the East Coast of England, but he established the little kingdom of the Scots and set upon its throne the king—Aidan—whose lineal descendant to-day occupies the throne of Great Britain. Although only a Presbyter, he reigned supreme over all the churches of his Order. His power was absolute, and for many years after his death, as Lowe remarks in his *History of Scotland*, “the Abbot and Culdees of ‘Hyona’ gained so much on the favour and esteem of the people that, even in their cloistered retreats, they were at the head of all *civil*, as well as ecclesiastical matters.”

The Rule followed by the Community was rigorous and—significant. Their pledge was for life—“*Usque ad mortem*” even unto death. On shortest notice they were prepared to take long, arduous and dangerous journeys; always to subject their will and wishes completely to the rule of the institution and the command of their Superior. However menial the work required of them, it was done without question. No one possessed any personal property. They held all things in common. Manual labour was elevated almost to a sacrament. “There are twelve hours a day in which a man ought to *work*.” They cultivated the soil, they fished the sea, “they built salt-water ponds on the shore to keep the seals which they used for food and for oil.” They daily devoted many hours to learning, to study and transcription of the scriptures, and throughout, in addition to their private devotions, they performed all the exacting offices of the Church—eight or ten stated services a day, the working brethren alone being excused from attending some of the offices.



Holy Communion, the supreme service of the Church, was celebrated every Sunday and on other festivals.

The number of churches actually founded by Columba in Scotland is variously estimated at from fifty-three to over three hundred.\* He is said to have founded one hundred churches "where the wave frequents," many on the islands in the neighbourhood of Iona. His influence and renown spread far and wide. The Island became a place of pilgrimage for those seeking his help, prayers and advice, and for centuries following by thousands seeking to honour his memory.

He died on the Island on Sunday, 9th June, 597, at midnight, in his seventy-seventh year, before the altar of his Church which he had served with such single-hearted ardour, such tireless devotion, surrounded by the Brethren of his Community, having achieved the distinction, rare even among the noblest of men, of being commonly called in his own lifetime a saint of God.

\* \* \*

### THE LAST WORDS OF ST. COLUMBA

*"These, my last words, I commend unto you, O my children, that ye shall preserve among yourselves, unfeigned charity and mutual peace; and if ye observe this rule according to the example of the holy fathers, God, the Strengtheners of the good, will help you; and I, dwelling with Him, will pray for you; and not only shall there be provided for you by Him the necessities of the present life, but also there shall be given you the gifts of eternal good things prepared for them that keep the Divine commandments."*

—Dying Message to the Brethren of all the Churches of His Order.

\*One authority, Spottiswood, states he founded 100 monasteries and 365 churches and ordained 3,000 priests or monks.





## IONA ABBEY

THE present monastic buildings are reputed either to occupy the site of the Church and hutments of Columba's foundation (of which, being of wattle and daub, no trace remains) or to be some little distance south of his settlement. The Abbey buildings were plundered and destroyed on several occasions by the Vikings, for the first time in 795, again in 801, and for the third time in 806, when they murdered sixty-eight of the monks at Martyrs' Bay. Cellach, the ruling Abbot, thereupon removed to Ireland, taking with him the relics of St. Columba, and founded a new monastery at Kells to replace that at Iona. For the next three hundred and fifty years the primacy of the Columban Churches was held by the Abbot of Kells and, after 1164, by the Abbot of Derry, Columba's early foundation. Iona, however, could not be abandoned. The next Abbot rebuilt the monastery and it is believed that the earliest of the many foundations traceable to-day at the site of the present Cathedral are the remains of this abbey and its subsequent additions. In 818 Columba's relics were restored to Iona and housed, it is claimed, in the little shrine by the present west door. Seven years later there was a further raid and massacre, but the monks succeeded in hiding the relics of their founder, some of which were subsequently taken by Kenneth MacAlpin to his new cathedral at Dunkeld c. 843. Some of the relics must, however, have been left in Iona or returned there, for there are various records of the tenth century of their being moved on several occasions from the holy isle to Ireland and back again.

In 986, Danes from Dublin descended upon the island and murdered the Abbot and fifteen brothers on the sands at the north end of the Island at the place known as Tra' Ban nam Manach—White Strand of the Monks. In 1074 Queen Margaret, wife of Malcolm Canmore, restored the monastery. The ruined Chapel of St. Oran is reputed to be part of her work. This monastery marked the change over from the Columban or Celtic Church to that of Rome. It was dedicated to the Order of Augustine.

In 1098, Magnus Barefoot, King of Norway, reduced the Western Isles, subsequently including them and Mann in the diocese of "Sodor and Mann" under the primacy of the Archbishop of Trondheim.

In the middle of the twelfth century Somerled secured the sovereignty of all the Scottish Isles south of Ardnamurchan, including Iona. In 1164 he reorganised the monastery which had again fallen into disrepair and offered the abbacy to the Bishop of Derry who, however, refused it. On Somerled's death in battle at Renfrew in the same year, Islay, Kintyre and part of Lorne, including Iona, fell to the share of his son Reginald, Lord of the Isles, who by 1203 rebuilt the monastery at Iona for the Benedictine Order ("Black Monks") and dedicated it to the Virgin Mary. The new community was taken under the protection of the Pope and either expelled or absorbed the last remaining Columban Monks. It is this abbey that forms the greater part of the foundation of the present buildings. Reginald also founded a Convent of the same Order in the Island, in charge of which he placed his sister Beatrice as its first Prioress. The ruins of the nunnery are still extant.

After 1247 the Abbots of Iona acknowledged the Bishop of Dunkeld as their Superior, even before the ecclesiastical superiority of the Norwegian Diocese of the Isles was transferred back to Scotland with the cession of the islands themselves in 1266.

About 1430 a new Scots Bishopric of the Isles was created, the Bishop taking up his residence in Iona, although the Abbey continued to be subject to Dunkeld until about 1507 when Iona again became the seat of the Bishopric, the Abbey being raised to the dignity of a Cathedral, but only for a short time. With the victory of the Reformers in Scotland, its ancient religious glory was for the time eclipsed and by the Order of the Convention of Estates of 1561 the Abbey and monastic buildings were dismantled. Of 360 memorial crosses said at one time to have existed in the island, only three remain to-day.

So came the years of desolation prophesied by Columba—

*"In Iona of my heart, Iona of my love,*

*Instead of monks' voices shall be lowing of cattle,"*

until, in 1899, George, 8th Duke of Argyll, gifted the Abbey to the Church of Scotland.

The Abbey Church was restored by the Church of Scotland through public subscription, between 1902 and 1910. The restoration of the remaining Abbey buildings is being carried out by The Iona Community who started on this work in 1938. So may Columba's further prophecy be fulfilled—

*"In Iona of my heart, Iona of my love,*

*Instead of monks' voices shall be lowing of cattle,*

*But ere the world come to an end*

*Iona shall be as it was."*



*Sacristy Door and Arches*

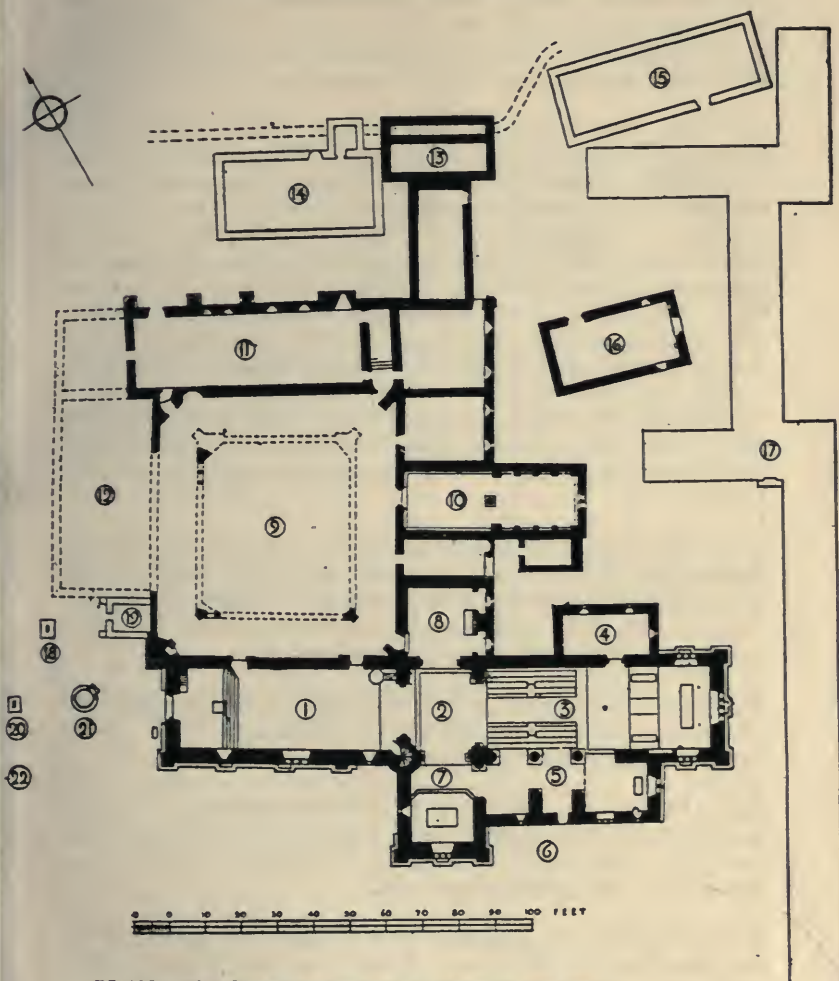




*Choir and Chancel*



# IONA ABBEY TO-DAY



*PLAN.—The figures correspond to those in the text.*

NAVE (1). The last portion of the Church to be re-roofed (P. Macgregor Chalmers, architect). The west doorway dates from re-building of 1500 and much of the remainder is modern. Note the flat ceiling; this form of roofing was carried over the choir and transepts in mediaeval days. Font in memory of Very Rev. Theodore Marshall, D.D.

**CROSSING AND TOWER (2).** The tower was formerly capped by a gabled roof containing a dovecot. South belfry window is a mediaeval clock face. The hands of the clock were replaced in 1940. The bell presented in 1931 weighs 22 cwts. Inside, note grotesque face on nave arch, earlier wide arch to north transept, and holy water stoup.

**CHOIR (3).** Dates largely from early sixteenth century re-building and was the first portion to be re-roofed. (Thomas Ross, architect.) Note old paving in sanctuary with large stone which formerly contained a brass, traditionally, of a Macleod. On either side are effigies of abbots; on the south Kenneth Mackenzie and on the north John Mackinnon. This is a very fine monument and is dated 1500. Sedilia for celebrant, deacon and sub-deacon at High Mass south of Communion Table with piscina next them. Stalls are modern and initials of donors are on each stall. Stained glass windows in north clerestory represent SS. Columba, Bride and Patrick, put in 1939, designed by Dr. Douglas Strachan.

**SACRISTY (4).** On north side of choir. Before 1500 the choir floor was level with the vase of the high arches and there was a low crypt beneath. At that date the arches were built up and present elaborate doorway formed.

**SOUTH CHOIR AISLE (5).** Dates from 1500 and is notable for its curious construction. The carvings on the capitals of the pillars are exceedingly interesting and depict among other subjects the Crucifixion and an angel weighing souls, with a devil depressing one side of the scale. There is a small piscina by the window near the communion table.

**SOUTH EAST TRANSEPT (6)** Outside the south aisle are the foundations of a large transept which was discovered some years ago. It is impossible to tell whether it ever advanced beyond this stage.

**SOUTH TRANSEPT (7).** Dates from the 1500 reconstruction and contains marble effigies of the eighth Duke of Argyll (*d.* 1900) and the Duchess Ina (*d.* 1925 and buried beneath), by Sir George Frampton. Note consecration cross beside arch into aisle.

**NORTH TRANSEPT (8).** The east wall is the earliest part of the Church and dates from the 13th century. Restored, and rose window inserted, 1905 (John Honeyman, architect). The two recesses by the windows formerly contained altars and the arch between, a statue, of which only the base remains. Stone stairway to dormitory block\* erected 1954 (Ian Lindsay, architect). Now used as Chapel by The Iona Community.

**CLOISTERS (9).** The cloister arcades are now in course of active restoration.\* West wall with Belfry\* erected 1954 (Ian Lindsay, architect).

\*By The Iona Community.

**CHAPTER HOUSE (10).** For meetings connected with monastic business, etc., was formerly square, but later extended eastwards. The eastern part is entered through two fine arches and is vaulted. This and the library above were restored\* 1940 (Ian Lindsay, architect). The upper part of the east range, formerly the dormitory of the monks, was \*restored in 1953-4 (Ian Lindsay, architect).

**REFECTORY (11).** Or dining room on the first floor on the north side of the cloisters. Re-roofed, restored and re-furnished 1948-1949\* (Ian Lindsay architect). The kitchens were formerly in the **WEST RANGE (12)**, of which the sole remains are foundations below the ground. **UNDERCROFT** now houses a fine collection of tombstones taken from the **Reilig Odhrain** for preservation and the shaft of a cross erected by Lachlan Mackinnon and his son John, the Abbot, in 1489.

**REREDORTER (13).** North of east range. The drainage channel through which a burn was diverted can still be seen. This building was re-roofed\* in 1944. It is now incorporated, with south block adjoining, in the **CARETAKER'S HOUSE**, completed in 1950\* (Ian Lindsay, architect). Next this building to the west is the **ABBOT'S HOUSE (14)** restored 1956 (Ian Lindsay, architect).

**INFIRMARY (15).** A detached building east of the above which it is hoped to restore as a museum for the stones in the undercroft. Just south of this building is a small detached **CHAPEL**, sometimes called **St. Michael's (16)**.

**COMMUNITY HOUSE (17).** A temporary wooden building containing a fine common room and 26 bedrooms for the use of The Iona Community, built 1938 (Alastair M'Queen, architect).

**ST. JOHN'S CROSS (18).** Restored from fragments 1926 by Professor Stuart MacAlister. A very fine example of 10th century work. Blown down and broken by gales at the end of 1951. Restored by H.M. Ministry of Works, 1954. Again blown down in February gales, 1957. Just east of it the small ruined chapel supposed to have contained **ST. COLUMBA'S TOMB (19)**, was restored in 1954-5 (Ian Lindsay, architect).

**ST. MATTHEW'S CROSS (20).** Only part of the shaft remains with a representation of the temptation of Adam and Eve carved upon it.

**WELL (21).** Opposite west door of Church. One of the best supplies on the island and used by the Community. The fragmentary building north west in which the water pump is installed was formerly the **GUEST HOUSE**.

**ST. MARTIN'S CROSS (22).** A magnificent 10th century cross. The sculpture on the west side represents, among other subjects, the Virgin and Child, Daniel in the Lion's Den, and David playing before Saul.

\*By The Iona Community.

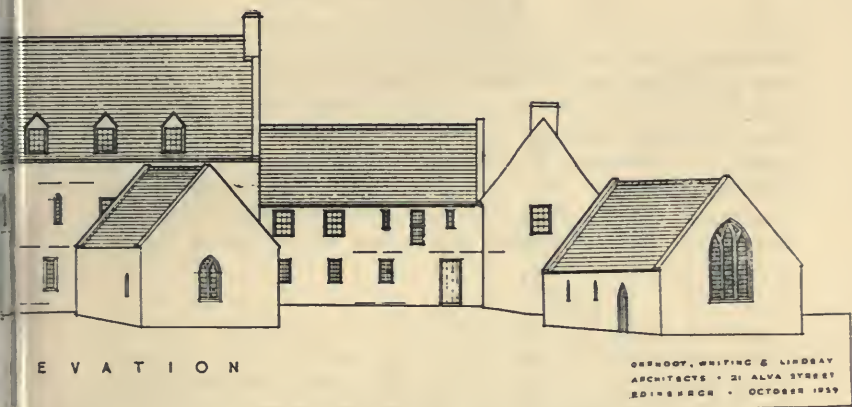


## THE RE-BUILDING

THE plans reproduced on the adjoining pages show the extent of the restoration which The Iona Community are carrying out. Doubtless there will be numerous alterations of detail before the work is finished, but the main conception is bound to remain the same owing to the nature of the buildings. For one thing, the old walls now standing cannot be altered in any way, as the ruins are among the list of scheduled monuments, and this means that every proposal has to be passed by the Ancient Monuments Department of the Ministry of Works. The plans shown here have already been approved in general, but, as each part is begun, further detailed drawings are submitted. The Ancient Monuments Department is not the only body who have a say in this matter, for though the Community are doing the work and will live in the restored abbey, they do not own it. This responsibility belongs to the Iona Trustees, who were formed in 1899 when the late Duke of Argyll handed the ruins to them to safeguard for the Church of Scotland. It was the Trustees who roofed the Abbey Church some forty-seven years ago, and they naturally take great interest



y as it will appear from the sea



in the unique heritage which is under their care. Apart altogether, then, from the natural desire of the Community to achieve a work of lasting beauty, it will be seen that there are safeguards enough to ensure the best possible results.

One of the chief occupations in a mediaeval monastery was the round of services held within its Church, and so the Church is always the finest and largest building of the group. Iona is no exception to this rule; in fact, the Abbey Church is the largest Church in the Western Highlands and became the Cathedral of the Isles for a short period before the Reformation. As mentioned above, it has already been restored so that the only alteration shown on the drawings is the addition of a saddle-backed roof to the tower. This feature is shown on 18th century prints and would undoubtedly add to the dignity of the tower, which would never have been left originally with its present unfinished appearance. It is also hoped to put this space to its old use, namely, that of a doocot, for the dove is the symbol and meaning of the word Columba. There are several small alterations which are desirable inside the Church, but they are hardly within the scope of this short survey. It may just be mentioned,

however, that wrought iron chandeliers and candle-holders have been placed in the choir and south aisle for use during the daily evening service.

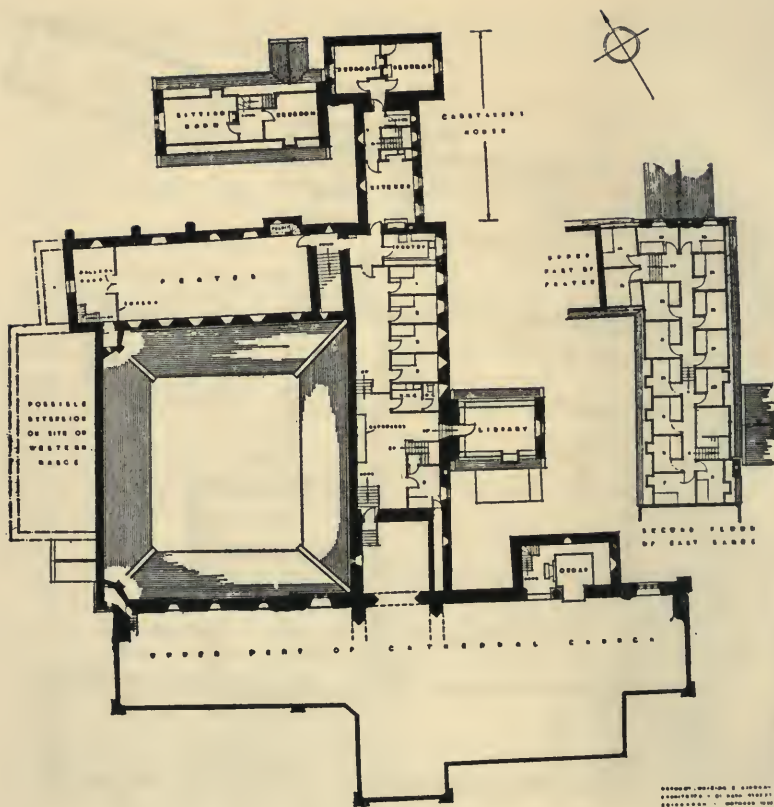
Northward of the nave lies the cloister, one of the most important features of the Abbey, the rebuilding of which is now in active progress. In mediaeval days the cloister was the centre of community life and not only the passage from one part of the buildings to another.

On the east side of the cloister and running north from the Church is the range of buildings which now form the main sleeping quarters, as once, according to the usual Benedictine plan, it contained the dormitory of the Monks. The main apartment on the ground floor is the chapter house with its two interesting arches which open into a vaulted eastward projection, whose upper floor, traditionally the scriptorium, has been roofed as the library. This was the first part to be finished by the Community. The main block of the eastern range is now completed, and, as can be seen from the plans, contains twenty small bedrooms situated on the first and second floors.

The whole of the north side of the cloister is occupied by the Frater or dining-room with its undercroft which was used for storage purposes. Next to the Church it is the largest apartment in the Abbey, and an idea of its size can be visualised by the fact that, though it is about two feet narrower than the nave, it is some two feet longer. Through the generosity of certain Norwegians, the roofing timber, felled in the forests of Norway, was landed on the island in 1947, and the re-roofing, restoration and re-furnishing of the building was completed by 1949-1950. This gift renews an old association, as for many years of the Middle Ages Iona was under the Norwegian Archbishop of Trondheim. The western range, where the kitchen was originally situated, is indicated on the plans, but its restoration does not form part of the present scheme, so kitchen accommodation has had to be found at the other end of the Frater and is incorporated in the east range. The caretaker's house, which is self-contained, occupies the old rere-dorter block, and the water channel for drainage, now dry, can still be seen. Both buildings of the rere-dorter block comprising the caretaker's house have now been completely restored and are now in use. Immediately to the west of the caretaker's house stands the Abbot's House, rebuilt to contain the cloakroom, baths, lavatories and drying room on the ground floor, while in the roof space above are a couple of apartments for the use of the head of the Community.

Besides the main block, grouped around the cloister there are two detached buildings which are included in the scheme. One is a small





adequately displayed. If they do not have a place of their own, there is grave danger of their being moved to some other part of the Abbey, which would tend to give the visitor an impression that it is an antiquarian show place. If the Abbey is to be the home of a living and vital Community, this is an impression which we wish to avoid at all costs.

IAN LINDSAY.



## PLACES TO SEE ON THE ISLAND

FROM their landing-place at **Port na Churaich**, within **Columba's Bay**, **Columba** and his twelve companions would have had to make their way for the first mile across hilly and inhospitable country before catching sight of the **Machair** (Sandy Plain) which must have lifted the hearts of the little band with its promise of sustenance. Here for centuries the monks tilled the rich soil. By **Port na Churaich** itself are a number of curious mounds and hillocks, interesting evidence of former dwellings whose origin and purpose is lost in antiquity. It is thought that here was the burial place of islanders who anciently lived in the neighbourhood.

On the beach of the bay are to be found many-coloured pebbles, fragments of the surrounding rocks—quartz, serpentine, marble and felspar—rolled and polished by the surf. The transparent green stones sometimes to be found here are believed to preserve the possessor from drowning, a relic of the old pagan belief in amulets and curing-stones, which **Columba** himself is known to have shared and practised, after sanctifying it with the Christian symbol of the Cross.

On the west shore just before reaching the **Machair** from **Port na Churaich** and after passing the lonely lochan **Staonaig**, is the **Spouting Cave**, a rocky cavern with an opening in its roof through which, at certain tides and winds, tons of sea-water are forced to a great height with a loud roaring noise.

It was at the **Machair** that up to as recently as about a hundred and fifty years ago the old pagan ritual was still performed of casting into the sea "The Great Porridge" in propitiation of the god of the sea who, it was hoped, would in return provide sea-weed to fertilise the land. It was on this side of the Island that the village originally stood, near the fields which produced the Islanders' crops and food. It was not until last century that, with their increasing dependence upon stores and food from the mainland, they began to build their homes near the landing place and the present village of **Baile Mor** came into being.

Continuing north to the edge of the plain, to the right of the road lies a round grassy mound **Sithean Mor**—"The Big Fairy Hill," or as it was formerly known in Gaelic, **Cnoc nan Aingel**—"The Hill of the Angels," associated with **St. Adamnan's** familiar story. **Columba** was here seen by one of his brother monks, "praying with hands spread out to heaven and raising his eyes heavenward . . . when behold suddenly a marvellous thing appeared . . . holy angels, citizens of the heavenly country, clad in white garments, flying to him with wonderful swiftness, began to stand round the holy man as he prayed, and after some conversation with the blessed man, that celestial band, as if perceiving that it was spied upon, sped quickly back to the heights of the heavens."

**Columba** believed in the angelology and demonology as they are literally described in the New Testament, and never doubted that the spiritual phenomena of Scripture exist at all times and become patent to

those with the gift of discerning them. With the inherent instinct of the old Gael for the spiritual reality behind all physical manifestation, greatly enhanced and strengthened through long years of daily meditation and inner discipline, he was able to confute and frequently win over the Druids. In the practice of occult powers—upon which depended the Druids' privileged position as advisers to the king and their authority over the people—he, on numerous occasions, revealed a proficiency greater than their own.

After passing the "Hill of the Angels," in the neighbourhood of Clachan Corrach and Maol (and between Cnoc nam Bradhan and Cnoc Mor) is the spot known as *Bol leithne* (Fold of Eithne) made memorable by a further story of Adamnan concerning Columba.

"For as the brethren, on one occasion after harvest work, were returning in the evening to the monastery . . . and came to a place midway, it is said, between the field on the plain and our monastery each of them thought he felt something strange and unusual . . . And they had the same feeling for some days successively, at the same place, and at the same hour in the evening. An elder brother said 'In the past few days, and even now, I perceive the fragrance of such a wonderful odour, just as if all the flowers on earth were gathered together in one place; I feel also a glow of heat within me not all painful but most pleasing and a certain unusual and inexpressible joy poured into my heart, which on a sudden so refreshes and gladdens me that I forget grief and weariness of every kind. Even the load, however heavy, which I carry on my back, is in some mysterious way so much lightened, from this place all the way to the monastery, that I do not seem to have any weight to bear.' All the other reapers in turn, declared they had exactly the same feeling." Upon asking the monk Baithen what it meant, he replied: "Ye all know our father Columba's tender care for us, and how he is always grieved when we return later than usual to the monastery. And now because he cannot come in person on this occasion to meet us, his spirit cometh forth to us as we walk along, and conveyeth to us comfort."

On continuing down the hill into the village *Martyrs' Bay* is passed just south of the present jetty, so named after the massacre of sixty-eight monks by the Vikings in 806. Here, too, were landed the bodies of the dead brought to Iona for burial, being laid upon a mound of earth called *Eala* (now slightly disturbed by the road). Thence they were carried to the *Reilig Odhrain* along "the Street of the Dead," long since obliterated. It led straight from the bay to the burial place by the north of the nunnery and to the north of *MacLean's Cross* (15th Century). The present road runs to the south and at the back of this Cross. The name *Cladh nan Druineach* associated with a site close to the present jetty is believed to commemorate the burial-place of the skilled stone-workers for which Iona was for centuries famous.

The little burn immediately to the north of the monastery buildings has been identified as the old mill-stream of Columba's time. It was



c• *St. Martin's Cross (10th century)*





*Norman Doorway of St. Oran's Chapel in Reilig Oran ;  
The Burial Place of the Kings*



supplied from an artificial loch called the Lochan Mor, now drained. The present house of Clachanach stands upon the northern end of the ridge of the old earthwork. At the southern end, where the earth work joins the Cnoc nan Carnan, have been found remains of an entrance and the foundation of some little huts, thought possible to have been those of monks. An eleventh-century introduction to Columba's *Altus Prosator* mentions "a certain stone that was in the monastery, Blathnat its name . . . and upon it division is made in the refectory." Locally, this stone is identified not with the boulder below the earthworks, but with a larger one on the other side of the next field below Clachanach (clach=a stone: ach=a field), which would place Columba's settlement some distance north of the present monastery buildings.

The making of Lochan Mor, the causeway traversing it known as Bishop's Walk, the little hermitage below Blathnat and the other in the centre of the Island, close by Cnoc nam Bradham, are thought possibly to go back to the time of the first monastery.

To the west of Blathnat, near the road, is the hillock called Iomair an Achd (Ridge of the Act), where the senior brethren are traditionally reputed to have met in council.

The rocky outcrop directly opposite the west door of the present Abbey is generally believed to be "the knoll that overlooks the monastery" which, according to Adamnan, Columba ascended on the eve of his death to utter the prophetic blessing: "Unto this place, small and mean though it be, great homage shall yet be paid, not only by the kings and peoples of the Scots, but by rulers of foreign and barbarous nations and their subjects. In great veneration, too, shall it be held by men of other Churches."

The ruins of the Hermit's Cell, now merely a circle, lie at the foot of the southern slopes of Dun-I in the Secluded Hollow. It is known in Gaelic as the Cobhain Cuilich, or "Culdees Cell." Such cells were used by certain monks who chose to live in solitude the better to meditate and pray. They were usually of two rooms—a living-room joined to a tiny chapel. Built of successive layers of flat stones projecting inwards, finally meeting at the top, they had the appearance of an inverted bowl and are commonly known as "bee-hive huts." Tradition has it that the Secluded Hollow was a spot especially loved by Columba and it may be that this cell was used by him on those occasions when he sought a spot in which to pray remote from men.

On the north slope of Dun-I just below the summit is the Well of Eternal Youth in which, it is said, if a woman bathes her face and hands before sunrise she will become young again: another relic possibly dating from the old belief of Druidical days that water—the bearer of life—possessed magical as well as curative properties. There is another well a little distance north-east of the Hermit's Cell where sailors, seeking favourable winds from the north to bear their ships south, used to throw their propitiatory offerings.

From the top of Dun I, less than 400 feet in height on a clear day can be seen the whole of the Inner Hebrides: to the south across the Sound, the Torran Rocks leading on to Colonsay, with the three Paps of Jura beyond, above the low shores of Islay. To the east, above the red granite rocks of the Ross of Mull, the cliffs of Buirg leading up to the majestic height of Ben More (3,170 feet) beyond. Further to the north, Staffa, renowned for its basalt columns and Fingal's Cave, lies in the foreground, some eight miles from Iona. Beyond it Rum and the mass of Sgurr of Eigg rise above Canna and on the horizon the blue Coolins of Skye draw the eye and lift the heart. To the north-west lie the long islands of Coll and Tiree low in the sea with the curious formation of the Dutchman's Cap, Lunga and the rest of the uninhabited Treshnish Isles nearer at hand.

From here, too, Iona itself may be seen in all its varied beauty, its hills and shadowed corries among fields of standing grain, its tawny hay-coles tethered by their shadows to meadows of green and gold. The opalescent sea creams over white sands. The blue smoke of scattered houses rises like incense in the air. Directly below, men labour on the Abbey wall, rose hued, that the old Gaelic prophecy may come true in our time: "*In the Isle of Dreams God shall yet fulfil Himself anew.*"

\* \* \*

### PRAYER FOR THE IONA COMMUNITY

*"O God, our Father, who didst give unto Thy servant, Columba, the gifts of courage, faith and cheerfulness and didst send men forth from Iona to carry the Word of Thine Evangel to every creature; grant we beseech Thee a like Spirit to Thy Church in Scotland, even at this present time. Further in all things the purpose of the New Community that hidden things may be revealed to them and new ways found to touch the hearts of men. May they preserve with each other sincere charity and peace, and, if it be Thy Holy Will, grant that a Place of Thine abiding be established once again to be a Sanctuary and a Light. Through Jesus Christ Our Lord."* Amen.

## A NOTE ON THE IONA COMMUNITY\*

THE Iona Community evolved in 1938 out of Dr. George MacLeod's eight years' experience of one of the worst-hit areas in one of the worst-hit cities in Great Britain, during the "hungry 'thirties." The city was Glasgow and the district was Govan. The experience revealed, among other things, the urgent and imperative necessity for the Ministry of the Church to find new ways to meet the clamant needs of men if ever it was again to re-establish that active relevance to the whole of life which formerly commanded the allegiance of their fathers. To preach of the Bread of Life to unemployed and despairing men with hungry families, without being actively concerned with the satisfaction of their physical needs, is a betrayal not only of them and of the Church, but of its Head. "Suppose some brother or sister is ill-clad and short of daily food, if any of you tell them 'Depart in peace! Get warm, get food' without supplying their bodily needs, what use is that?" (James 2: 15-16).

So The Iona Community came into being: a Brotherhood of men, ministers and laymen, concerned with the working out in practical experiments new methods of approach relevant to the urgent problems of our time, and in conscious acceptance of the risk of making mistakes. They at present number 93.

As Dr. MacLeod has written, the Community believes "the primary problem before mankind in coming years is how to plan society and at the same time preserve the rights of the individual. The tremendous truth emerges again that Christianity in its fullness alone can be relied on to conserve the individual as being of any moment at all. Man's only claim to a place of honour lies in the fact that Christ died for him. In the Christian Church—provided she can be wed again to 'the Common Life'—lies the only key to the world problem. (e.g. Her Sacrament of Baptism is precisely the assertion of the worth of every individual, holy and of infinite account in the sight of God; Her Sacrament of Holy Communion is precisely the declaration of the New Society in Christ Jesus, of 'how men may share their Bread,' which is the essential problem of a planned society). Her Gospel is the only clue.

"But we believe that the present *Expression* of our Faith—in Church organisation and modes of worship—is failing fully to reflect our Belief or fully to satisfy men's desire for worship. Both the organisation of our parishes and our practices in worship magnificently served a previous age; but the world pattern in which they were set has got broken. Reverent

\*For a full description of the aims and activities of The Iona Community, see *What Is The Iona Community?* 3/- post paid from the Publishing Dept.



experiment in new organisation and new approaches to worship are urgently called for, if the Gospel is to be Good News to our generation."

These experiments are exemplified on the Island in the building of the Abbey, which as Dr. MacLeod explains makes possible "an experiment in full Christian living. We discuss these problems against the background of a common act of labour: while the problems of our own Fellowship keep realistic our experiments in living worship.

"(e.g., The presence of the craftsmen as full fellow members with the ministers symbolises the priesthood of all believers: making realistic our discussion of how again, in the world, all work may become a vocation and a ministry. The presence of the parsons as labourers to the craftsmen on the walls symbolises the truth that we are not a caste apart. Together, on the wall and in the Abbey, we seek to forge a new vocabulary of work and worship)."

The Community are on the Island only for three months in the summer. In recent years because of the demands of the work of rebuilding some of the craftsmen have been living and working on Iona all the year round. The minister members, who normally undergo a two years' period of training after leaving their Divinity Halls, spend their first three months on Iona and then go back to the mainland to work, within the parish system, under the minister of the parish to which they are appointed. Thereafter they enter the ministry in the normal way. There are no life vows. Most members of the Community are married. Full members of the Community now number 98, of whom 14 serve the Church abroad. All members who can manage it reassemble on Iona each year in June for conference and retreat.

On the mainland the members of the Community make experiment of how the essential principles of work and worship in Iona can be expressed in the Church to-day. The congregation where they work is now, for them, the Community. (Though once a month in winter the Community gathers on the mainland to discuss hopes and failures.) Experiments are being made at such places as—new housing schemes in city and in smaller towns (for the problems of these "new communities" differ much from those of down-town charges); down-town churches refashioned by the Church for experiment in community and youth work; parishes in the smaller industrial towns. The Community is specially concerned with the task of industrial evangelism. But a group of its members are also tackling the problems of the rural parish.

In all these differing places they seek to glimpse what things will look like in the coming age and plot experiments to meet it, in terms of what Iona days have taught.

The members of the Community keep a daily common discipline of prayer and life and are also bound by a common economic discipline. There are 110 Minister Associates, 256 Women Associates, some 33 Laymen Associates and over 298 Youth Associates; all of whom keep a corporate rule. The number of Friends of The Iona Community is





*St. John's Cross (10th century)*



*Abbey Church of St. Mary and Monastery buildings*

7,053. The minimum annual subscription of a Friend is 5s. a year, for which they receive *The Coracle* (the magazine of the Movement) twice yearly.

In addition to Community House where the minister and craftsmen members of the Community live, there are the Youth Camps—the Village Camp in huts and the North-End Camp under canvas. There is also the Fishing Camp at Camus on the Ross of Mull.

To these camps in summer come some 100 young people, men and women, each week. The majority of them come from the industrial parishes of Scotland but many come from country places, and from England and from abroad. They join in the morning and evening worship of the Community and spend their mornings in Bible study, discussion and work.

For these 700 young people each summer Iona becomes the inspiration of the work to which they return. Each Sunday the Sacrament of Holy Communion is celebrated in the Abbey Church. Each Thursday evening there is an Act of Belief when those who wish may come forward and personally dedicate themselves to a closer discipline in the service of Christ, of Scotland and the world.

Community House, 214 Clyde Street, Glasgow, C.1, is the centre of the Community's youth work on the mainland. The House contains a Restaurant, a Hostel, a Library, Classrooms and a Chapel. In the winter classes are held for the members of any youth organisation or of none—in Drama, in Films, in The Faith and the Social Order, in The Meaning of the Faith. By its conferences, its services and its life, Community House tries to carry out in terms of city life what the Camps and Community House in Iona express in a shorter season and more ideal conditions.

Further particulars of the work may be obtained from the Warden, at 214 Clyde Street. Any who wish to visit Community House will be welcomed by him.

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## FURTHER DEVELOPMENTS FOR WHICH WE ASK YOU TO PRAY

Iona as a Centre of Christian Unity. The Abbey Church cannot be the exclusive possession of any denomination. It belongs to Christendom and the Church of Scotland would restore it in the name of the whole Catholic Church throughout the world. By the terms of the Trust Deed through which it was gifted to the National Church by George, 8th Duke of Argyll, it is provided that any recognised Christian denomination can apply for its use for the celebration of its full office of worship. It thus becomes the only Church building, known to us, in Christendom



where no Christians are guests but all can claim to be at home. When its restoration is completed, conference may well be held here of all who profess and call themselves Christians in circumstances of complete equality. One meaning of Iona is—a dove. The meaning of Columba is also—a dove, Pray that the Holy Spirit of Peace may be established in its every corner and Church Union consummated within its walls.

**Iona as a Healing Centre.** From the sixth to the sixteenth century the island was famous as a place of healing. The prayers of the Faithful in the Abbey were answered and many were cured. In our modern day science more and more declares the indissoluble relationship between the Spiritual and Material, which the Church has always protested. Prayers for Divine Healing are being made again for individuals who request it each Wednesday at the daily Evening Service of the Community (9 p.m.). In summer time these prayers are made in the Abbey. In winter time they are made at the mainland headquarters of the Community.

Pray that the Holy Spirit, the Spirit of Health, may more and more invade these prayers of men and make them powerful.

**Iona as a Mecca of Scottish Youth in summer time.** Across Mull from Craignure, past the Stone Circle at Loch Buie, still stand the old Druid upright stones, like sentinels on the road to Iona. Before the present road was built they were used for centuries as signposts to mark the track. These same stones have looked down on pagan Celts making their way to the island, sacred in Druid lore long before the coming of St. Columba. They have stood as silent witness to the multitudes who came that way to seek spiritual counsel of St. Columba himself. And they have marked the long processions of pilgrims on horse, on foot carrying the litters of the sick and halt to the ancient place of healing. To-day on bicycle and foot the youth of Britain seek the open road again. It is our hope that increasingly one objective of Scottish youth on holiday tramp should be the same great destination: and their road, the ancient pilgrim way. Youth Hostels must go up at convenient distances: carefully designed to fit and not to mar the landscape. It is our belief that when they thus may travel, youth will find an island that will be no mere holiday resort and an Abbey that will be no mere "museum piece." We would have them find there a House of Hospitality where the old songs are sung again and a House of God where the old psalms are raised in daily worship. We would have them challenged by an active Place of Healing and a Living Home of Christian Unity. Such an island as will make the Faithful among them rejoice as in early days, and the doubters ponder. And we would have them discuss the Faith there as a Living Directive for all our modern needs. So would they return, as the Community returns, to the lowland problems of our time to develop in Parish and in Community House the worship and obedience of the



Living God. Then, indeed, we might begin to say, in no romantic or archaic sense, "Iona shall be as it was."

*Thou shalt arise and mercy yet  
Thou to mount Zion shall extend ;  
The time is come for favour set  
The time when thou shalt blessing send.*

*God in His glory shall appear  
When Zion He builds and repairs  
He shall regard and lend His ear  
Unto the needy's humble pray'rs.*

GEORGE MACLEOD

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PEACE AND ADVENTURE : THE STORY OF IONA, *by Ellen Murray. Published by The Iona Community. 4s. 6d. (postage 9d.).*

ST. COLUMBA : A RECORD AND A TRIBUTE, *by Duncan Macgregor.*

THE ENCYCLOPAEDIA BRITANNICA.

For a full, authoritative and delightful description of the lives of the Celtic Saints, fully illustrated, see *Diana Leatham's THEY BUILT ON ROCK*, obtainable from The Iona Community, 214 Clyde Street, Glasgow, C.1, 16s., post paid, and also her *CELTIC SUNRISE*, 13s. 6d., post paid.

*What Is The Iona Community ? 2/6 (postage 6d.).*

*See also IONA: A BOOK OF PHOTOGRAPHS containing 60 studies of the Island and Abbey, 10/6 (postage 1/-).*

A Map of Iona printed in 5 colours is obtainable at 2/6 (*postage 6d.*)



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